

# Toursapes

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**ABSTRACT:** *Harvey's assessment of the Lefebvrian concept of the Right to the City is that it is a communal right, shared by association with the community around the urban project. How might this idea translate to a small island nation, recently transformed from being a rural society, headlong into a post-urban, spatially chaotic coagulation of small cities, suburbs, and landscapes of tourism consumption, or 'Toursapes' ?*

*Existing and emerging Toursapes can be mapped and analysed, at different but simultaneous scales, related to their local, city or regional importance, and the meanings of these in the visual and spatial order can be reviewed. This work will propose exploratory scenarios for addressing tourism related spatial practice, using Irish Case Study examples, and also will investigate how communal rights to Toursapes could be claimed or exercised, for use by the broad community around the analysis, management, control and proposition of spatial form.*

**KEYWORDS :** spatial practice, scalar units, Toursapes

## BACKGROUND

In contemporary urban research, the field of politics, and urban politics in particular, is to the fore, with growing numbers of contributions on the potential of design to be informed by issues of governance, politics, and ethics. In urban geography and anthropology, Harvey's assessment of the Lefebvrian concept of the Right to the City<sup>1</sup> is gaining ground as the world's economies shift and mutate. Harvey's assessment is that this right to the city is a communal right, shared by association with the community around the urban project. His contention is that the freedom to remake ourselves and our cities is "*one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights*".

At another extreme of scale, the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organisation), under Article 7 of the *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism* (1999), asserts the Right to Tourism, stating that "The universal right to tourism must be regarded as the corollary of the right to rest and leisure"<sup>2</sup>. These rights would seem to apply to a mobile population, defined only once they undertake the journey as tourists. In this sense they are less like the citizens considered in urban terms, and more like nomads, or citizens in transition.

In *The Production of Space*<sup>3</sup>, (1974) Henri Lefebvre describes spatial practice as embracing "*production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation*" (Lefebvre 1974, Pg 33). The spatial practice impacts of the conflict between place specific citizen (a place being defined to include situated, specific qualities) and non-place specific rights of the tourist will

be a focus of this paper.

It could be argued that rights to the city, or in relation to the urbanising process, are less abstract than other so-called human rights, connected as they are to ideas of place, centre, edge, physical size, and inter-relations between separate physical or mapped entities. However, in the globalising world, the generalised explosion of space has caused the relations between individuals, communities and geographical scales to be re-arranged, and a new urgency has emerged, to understand these new relations and arrangements.

At the scale of the city, assessment, evaluation, and measurement methods for the visual, formal or morphological aspects have evolved substantially since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, when ideas of the picturesque confronted modernism, leading to new ways of seeing, including Gordon Cullen's *Townscape*<sup>4</sup>, Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City*, and also Kevin Lynch, Donal Appleyard, John R Myer, (1964), in their "The View from the Road"<sup>5</sup>, which opened up ways to see highways in motion, dynamically and positively, including explorations of the dynamic and peripheral aspects of human vision.

Cullen's pursuit of 'serial vision' allowed for multiple visual readings of the city in time, and was happening as Lynch (et al) were filming drives around Boston, speeding them up, and reflecting on the relevance of film and motion for designers of highways, for city populations and drivers, and for the viewing audience. The framing of the visual in motion, and across new boundaries of time and place, seemed to promise great innovation in how spatial practice and agency might evolve into the future, bringing cinematic fluidity to static mapping and data.

Evolving perceptions of visual aspects of landscape during this time included the development of methods of landscape quality assessment, and increasing concentration on mapping and aesthetics as factors in describing 'scenery' in the natural environment, or isolated rural locations worthy of evaluation or protection.

More recently, computer technology and GIS have allowed modelling and information gathering on description and measurement of the designed environment to replicate the 3d world of reality, and the evaluation of landscapes has been increasingly concerned with ecological and biological, climate and social aspects of these places.

Fast forwarding to the twentieth first century, and considering a contemporary spatial practice where movement by individuals and groups is central, and given that it seems to have become more and more a characteristic of supermodernity, much of the framework for managing and developing the designed environment still depends on the places from which Cullen, Lynch and others sought to depart. Two dimensional mapping, policy and text driven regulation, and attachments between land ownership and zonings of various kinds still hold power over alternative ways to see and appraise the designed environment. In large parts of the world, readings of the physical surroundings are based fundamentally in the plot outline of private ownership, and the community around this narrow section of the population seems to predominate in the engagement with spatial practice which prevails.

Is it possible that the trajectory of the transient tourist as a consumer or 'engaged observer' of the designed environment could open new possibilities for methods of measuring and evaluating spatial environments, whereby the collective or community around tourism could represent a "public", and have rights, ethical responsibilities, and jurisdiction? If this proposition were possible, what methods could be useful to describe and record the site or place which is consumed, engaged with or visited by the tourist? And if this community around tourism has rights, how are these rights balanced with those

of the local populations? Other mobile populations, such as immigrants, returning emigrants, nomad cultures, communities around ethnicity, sexuality, or belief and other non-specific place situated groups are increasingly the subject of study in spatial practice and urbanism.

Taking from the OED our definition for the Tour as ‘a circuitous journey embracing the principal places of the country or region mentioned’<sup>6</sup>, and tourism as traveling for pleasure, we can then define a landscape as ‘an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors...[That] landscape forms a whole, whose natural and cultural components are taken together, not separately’<sup>7</sup>. In order to propose exploratory scenarios for addressing tourism related spatial practice, we can then consider the ‘Tourscape’, which may be defined as an artificially constructed zone, tour, route or journey around a landscape containing certain highlights, sometimes partially or formally legitimised by official recognition. In effect the Tourscape is the spatially constructed world of the mobile viewer, seen from particular angles, and made whole by the completion of the route.

It is arguable that this proposed tourist route or Tourscape can be of any physical extent, size or scale, even to the extent of relating, and a modest level to the architectural route within a building, and at another extreme opposite scale right up to a regional level scenic route or a National Park. The simultaneous reading of the concept can be termed Simultaneous Scales, allowing multiple levels of understanding and reading of places, some within others, many linked by association or type and category, simultaneously. Just as the city is constituted as collections of buildings, then together constituting neighbourhoods, including overlaps and intersections, so also can routes through buildings, or whole blocks, etc, be connectable, (for example shopping centres) overlapping, or sit within each other comfortably for analysis and discussion purposes.

The idea of the highway route as a spatial unit was developed by Lynch in *The View from the Road* (1964), and among other examples, he discussed the architectural route, whereby the journey through a building, or on approach, or through a garden, could be described in a similar way to the sense of spatial sequence on the highway, being “*like that of large-scale architecture; the continuity and insistent temporal flow are akin to music and the cinema*”.

Lynch further develops the design objectives for this spatial sequence on Pg 18, under the heading The Objectives of Design ;

*“the principal objectives in shaping the highway visual experience may now be summarised...The first is to present the viewer with a rich, coherent sequential form, a form which has continuity and rhythm and development, which provides contrasts, well joined transitions, and a moving balance. The second...to clarify and strengthen the driver’s image of the environment, to give him a picture that is well structured, distinct and far ranging as possible. He should be able to locate himself, the road, and the major features of the landscape, to recognise those features with surety, and to sense how he is moving or approaching them. The third objective is to deepen the observers grasp of the meaning of his environment; to give him an understanding of the use, history, nature, or symbolism of the highway and its surrounding landscape. The roadside should be a fascinating book to read on the run. Ideally, all three objectives should be achieved by means which interlock at every level. We believe these objectives can be achieved in highway design. Usually, alas, one aspires to nothing more than an absence of irritation on the road”.*

Other innovations in the work included Space Motion Diagrams, Orientation Diagrams, etc, (Pgs 30, 31) all relating the dynamics of the driven route, to the area, to serial vision, and not unrelated to ideas

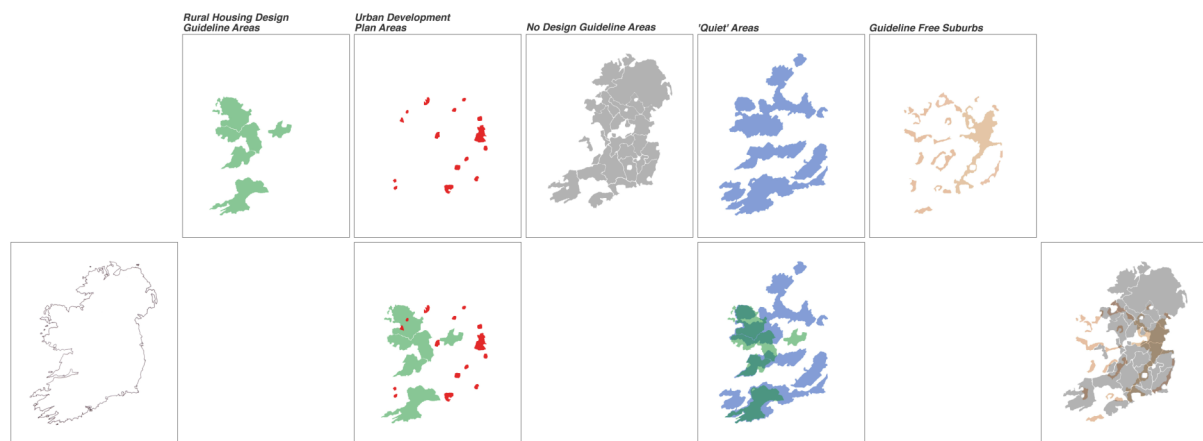
developed by the Architectural Review and Cullen in Townscape. These ideas are significant contributors to the ideas of the Tourscape.

Working from Castell's definition of 'spatial units'<sup>8</sup>, which attempt to define geographical scale in terms of its social function, and which could include neighbourhoods, urban cores, metropolitan regions, even national urban systems, it is possible to demonstrate the fact that the Tourscapes concept can work as a possible additional scalar unit, and could be devised and read at multiple scales, and also in many designed landscape types, including urban and rural, internal and external.

In order to explore the use of the Tourscape as an analysis tool or method, applied to landscapes of differing scales, selected differing sized Tourscapes are proposed in Ireland as Case Study examples. As a small island and nation state, with a heavily neo-liberalised economy, and designed environment and spatial practice culture which borrows heavily from the English model, (though also highly influenced by American cultural forces), it is arguable that Ireland has recently been transformed from being a rural society, headlong into a post-urban, spatially chaotic coagulation of small cities, suburbs, and landscapes of tourism consumption, or Tourscapes (Fig 1).

Because the social life of the Tourscape exists in order to facilitate consumption; of views, of the visual landscape, of the by-products of leisure, of even the natural environment in extreme instances, it can be proposed that the spatial unit of the Tourscape is one partially defined by consumption.

Tourism in Ireland, though developed there relatively early in world terms, is not a substantial contributor to the economy. According to Oxford Economics and WTTC estimates, the total contribution of tourism to Ireland's GDP is just over 5% as of 2011.<sup>9</sup> While Ireland did not suffer the physical effects of mainland European mass tourism during the 70's or 80's, the changes in the designed environment of the last fifteen years did however bring similarly radical shifts in the physical presence of tourism on the ground. Many spatial impacts of this income generator have been widespread and permanent.

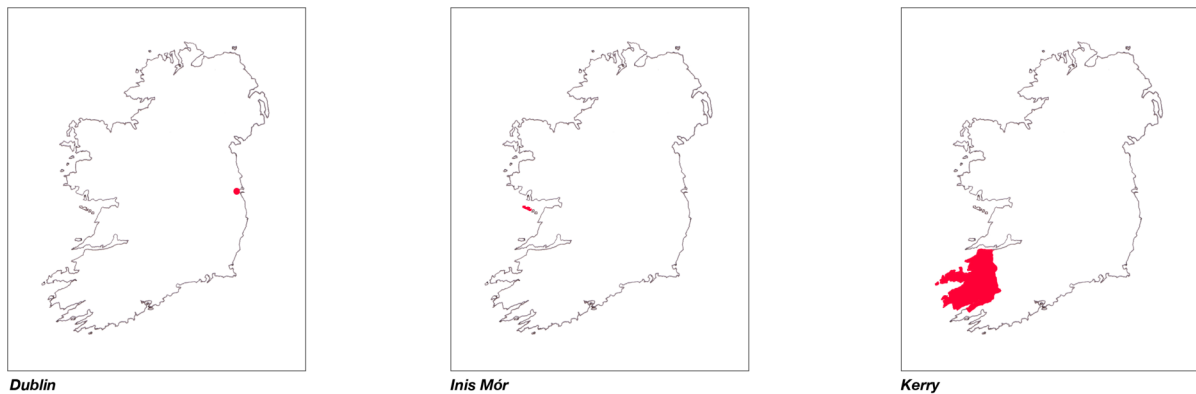


**Figure 1** Ireland Mapping

Selecting multiple scales and readings for particular examination, the spatial consequences of inappropriately feeding a tourism economy could be examined through the lens of the Tourscape. In Ireland, the rate of vacancy of 'second' or holiday houses is more than 15% above international averages in many parts of the island. In the 10 years to 2008, there was a 75% increase in the number of hotel rooms available in Ireland, while numbers of visitors since 2008 have dramatically decreased. Leaving aside the local and international economic factors which contributed to this chaotic spatial production

and distribution, the results are a pressing problem in many ways, formally, socially, economically, but also culturally, as the dramatic change in the shape of places leaves communities without any sense of control, or rights to influence the future shape of their place. The fact that much of the oversupply of tourist accommodation is not even located within Tourscape areas could also be examined in a separate study.

In international terms, Ireland is interesting as a Tourscape Case Study location, partly because it combines large areas of highly visually spectacular natural landscape with recent over-development and destruction of the environment for tourism purposes. Another interesting international Case Study example could be the island of Lanzarote, Canary Islands, where a different set of cultural values led to protection of natural landscape and traditional architecture until relatively recently.



**Figure 2** Three Tourscape Locations

Three tourscapes are chosen (Fig 2) ; Local, (a walking route around central Dublin), Parish, a small tourism island area, (a cycling route around Inis Mór, Aran Islands, Pop. 1,100 approx.), and a regional or County scale, (the Ring of Kerry, one of the most popular driving tourist routes in Ireland). Each is analysed in relation to the real lived experience on the ground of these places, which rarely concurs with the abstract planning or design representations of these areas officially. Each of these is chosen because it demonstrates “some qualities as a sequence”<sup>10</sup>;

#### Ring of Kerry

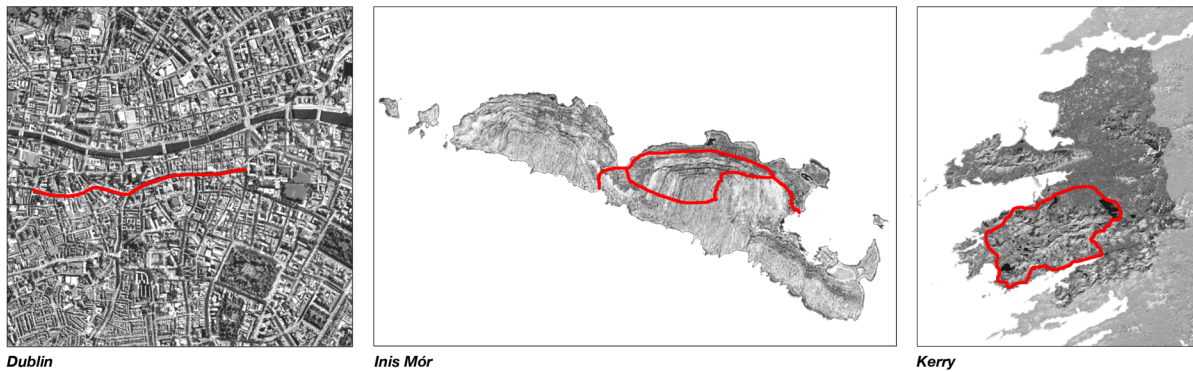
The Ring of Kerry is a 170km trail/ driving route around the Iveragh Peninsula in County Kerry in South Western Ireland, duration driving, approximately one day. At certain times of the year, tourist guides suggest that drivers circulate anti-clockwise, because that way traffic volumes will not be equal on both sides of narrow stretches of road.

#### ‘Ring of Aran’

The ‘Ring of Aran’ cycling route is completely informally constituted, by private bike hire companies mainly, and has been defined as a result of a tradition, which has grown slowly over time, of day-tripper tourists to the island only having enough time to cycle a certain distance. This includes obvious highlights such as cliffs and archaeological remains, and has led to the concentration of movement visible in many Tourscapes to be particularly evident here, by contrast with other empty routes alongside.

#### Central Dublin

This is a recently informally constituted walking route through a historic part of the city centre, mainly in order to arrive from the city centre at a major tourism location, the Guinness Storehouse, the historic site of the famous brewery. Although there is no official recognition of this route as a Tourscape, numbers of pedestrians is increasing rapidly, and spatial impacts include pedestrian congestion at traffic junctions, spatial disorientation of tourists, etc. (Fig 3)



**Figure 3** Tourscape Routes

While each of these three examples has partial protection under the various planning controls as regards scenery, landscape, natural heritage, areas of special protection, protected structures, etc, none is considered sufficiently clearly as an entity or whole, as to be considered, along the route or Tourscape, in its entirety. It's almost as though the regulatory frameworks set up over time refuse to acknowledge the reality on the ground, as if it were obstructing the systems for measuring or analysing the real lived places.

The innovation in mapping represented by the Tourscape includes making a GIS based filmed viewing tool, the 3d model of a territory which has proven tourist numbers flowing along a route, and simultaneously running a visitor eye level video of this alongside, and on the same screen as, mobile mapping and sectional / topographical information, which changes with the viewer's location and point of view (Fig 4). The objective is to build the most reliable survey information model possible, live and dynamic, to re-create as closely as possible, the experience of being on this route or Tourscape. From these basic premises, many other layers can be overlaid. These include traffic modelling, junction planning and scenario testing, visual impact planning for development, prioritisation for funding based on lived/visited experiences, etc

The Tourscape seems to invite conflict with the official palimpsest for the city or landscape underneath the feet of the tourist. While they travel in a seamless route, often circular or rhythmical, and inclined to have incident either formally set up, or as a set of pieces or attractors on an informal path, the lines and boundaries of official maps confuse this real world repeatedly. Neither of these two worlds seem to have to confront each other much; the plans and maps for an area are centrally driven and controlled, the market outside invents the Tourscape daily, and, an important feature, it can re-invent, thwart or bend it as well, following dynamic change in the real world. Thus, new tourism attractions can cause a Tourscape to appear overnight (Storehouse), or an innovation in transport mode can cause a Tourscape to appear relatively quickly (bicycles, Aran), and over-concentration by the market can cause other (adjoining) Tourscapes to die or fade away (Ring of Kerry, Staigue Fort).

The possible concentrations or overlap of groups of Tourscapes could indicate cluster activities worthy



rights might apply over time, more communal rights, and possibly rights held by the action or consumption itself, rather than by individuals within this tourism 'community'. Of course with these rights could come responsibilities, counter-claims, etc, but proper management of the dynamics around the Tourscape could lead to positive engagement over time between the physical surroundings of any landscape and this moving population of tourism.

## REFERENCES

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